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ABSTRACT

Thirteen brief papers address issues in inclusive education, with special emphasis on concerns and applications in Illinois. The following issues are discussed: (1) the relationship of the inclusive schools concept to that of providing a continuum of alternative placement options; (2) needed changes in current funding of special education to provide incentives (rather than disincentives) for school districts to include students with disabilities in regular classes and schools; (3) the practices of mainstreaming, integration, and "dumping" of students into regular classes without supports as opposed to "supportive" education in an inclusive education system; (4) needed restructuring in preservice training of teachers if inclusive education is to be fostered; (5) benefits of inclusive education for families; (6) the destructive effects of categorical labels; (7) the urgency of the removal of architectural barriers in public schools; (8) inservice and administrative supports needed by both regular and special education teachers for successful inclusion of students with disabilities; (9) specific ways administrators can support inclusion; (10) the role of the individualized education program in inclusive schooling; (11) a comparison of such terms as "least restrictive environment," "integration," "mainstreaming," "regular education initiative," and "inclusion"; (12) accountability issues at the state level; and (13) curriculum issues and inclusive education. Some papers contain references. (DB)

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A SERIES OF ISSUE PAPERS

What About the Continuum?
How Should Special Education Services Be Funded?
The Fears About "Dumping"
Teacher Preparation
What Are the Benefits for Families?
Categorical Labels
Architectural Barriers
Teacher Supports
Administrative Supports
Individualized Education Programs
Terms, How Do They Differ?
How Can the State be Accountable?
Curriculum Issues

FEBRUARY, 1994

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WHAT ABOUT THE CONTINUUM?

Much debate in Illinois has resulted from a common misunderstanding that "inclusion" will take the place of the "continuum of alternative placement options". Although inclusion (supporting students to learn in regular classes and schools) and the continuum both have a basis in federal law, people fear that the two are incompatible and cannot co-exist. Following this erroneous line of thinking, there have been attempts to differentiate between "full" and "partial" inclusion. The term "full inclusion" has become frightening to parents in that many people have been led to believe that "in an inclusive system, there will be no other options even if your child needs them". These misconceptions must be alleviated in order for Illinois to move toward inclusive schools. The idea that inclusive schools cannot exist in a system that maintains a "continuum of alternative placement options" is a program to maintain the status quo of a system that unnecessarily segregates its students. This paper addresses the issues surrounding the debate regarding the "continuum", including "full" and "partial" inclusion.

Individuals and groups who fear the movement of students with special needs from segregated environments to regular classes and schools have coined the phrases "partial inclusion" and "full inclusion". In most cases, these individuals and groups state support for "partial" inclusion and opposition to "full" inclusion. It is important for individuals interested in school inclusion to understand that "partial inclusion" represents "business as usual" in regards to how decisions where students with disabilities attend school are made. It means that some students will be denied access to regular classes on the basis of the label they are given. This is clearly in opposition to the premises in the Individuals' with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is also important to recognize that the basic premise behind inclusion is providing supports to students in the least restrictive environment, the regular class, as opposed to requiring students to leave the regular class to receive supports. There is no "partial" way to do this. When a student is removed from the regular education environment, it should be only as a last resort, as the law requires. Again, doing this "partially", for some students and not for others, would constitute continued partiality and bias against students with particular labels or educational needs. The term "full" inclusion, on the other hand, denotes a system where service alternatives would not be present. This also is not the case with inclusive schools. Inclusive schools offer an array of flexible services and supports, including adapted curricula, materials and instruction and necessary personnel to assure the educational progress of their students. Inclusive schools, however, offer those services and supports wherever the student is, including the regular class, rather than sending the student to receive the services. Again, the intention behind "partial"inclusion is to exclude some students......inclusive education cannot be built on a "partial" premise.

The most important questions regarding "continuum of alternative placement options in the current debate surrounding school inclusion are:

1. What is the relationship between "school inclusion" and the requirements for a "continuum of alternative placements?

2. Does school inclusion mean there cannot be a "continuum of alternative placement options" in Illinois?

3. Will there be changes in the way that Illinois implements the "continuum of alternative placement options"?

The first two questions can be answered by examining the requirements for the "least restrictive environment"and the requirements for the "continuum of alternative placements" in relationship to the desired outcomes of school inclusion.

The "continuum of alternative placements" requirements are found in the regulations promulgated under the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The requirements include two components. The first is that the state makes provision for "instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions". The second is that the state must make "provision for supplementary services to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement".

While school inclusion should not be defined as a place on the "continuum," it should not be misrepresented as a replacement for the "continuum." School inclusion does bring attention to the fact that the first option (regular classes) on the "continuum of alternative placements" has not been available to students with disabilities in Illinois, particularly for students with certain labels. School inclusion also brings attention to the fact that the second and most important of the requirements in the IDEA language establishing the "continuum of alternative placements" has been overlooked in placement practices in Illinois. That is the part which requires schools to make provision for supplementary services to be provided in conjunction with the regular class option on the "continuum".

The requirements for "least restrictive environment" (LRE) are found in the law, itself, and require that the State establish "procedures to assure, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily". This requirement clearly establishes the regular education class as the placement of first choice, an idea that is inherent to school inclusion. The concept of school inclusion brings attention to the fact that the regular class historically has not been the placement of first choice among the options on the "continuum" for students with disabilities.

"Inclusion" is a civil and educational right. Schools should be equally receptive and respond to the educational needs of all children regardless of individual differences. Inclusion recognizes that children may be devalued by segregation and, therefore, asserts, as did the authors of the IDEA, that children should be removed from their natural educational settings only as a last resort. Inclusion places the burden of proof on the school to justify removal rather than on the child to justify why he or she should be allowed to return to regular education environments. Again, the basis for this thinking is in the law.

The third question, "Will there be changes in the way that Illinois implements the "continuum of alternative placement option?", can be answered unequivocally, "yes". The change will make it possible for many more students with disabilities to attend regular classes with the services provided there rather than in some other centralized location. Because this represents a fundamental change, not only in terms of where students are educated, but also in terms of who holds the responsibility for the education of students with disabilities, opposition can be expected.

Currently, the "placement" of students with disabilities is driven by the label assigned as a result of a case study evaluation. Services that are associated with certain labels are "housed" in centralized locations as "programs." Examples of the centralization of services are TMH centers, programs for autistic students, EMH classrooms, cross-categorical classrooms, visual impairment programs, etc. When the services are centralized, students with coinciding labels must be sent to the "program" to receive the service. As such, most students have only one or two options available to them. For all students with disabilities, the regular class placement is rarely an option. When a students is "mainstreamed" or "integrated", the services and supports stay in the "program" and rarely follow the student into the regular education environment. In an inclusive system, the services would be brought to the student in the regular class, enhancing greatly the likelihood of educational progress.

In an inclusive system, school districts will assume that the student will attend the regular class regardless of the label assigned to the student (also see Issue Paper regarding Categorical Labels). The school will also assume the responsibility for providing special education services and supports in the regular classroom. Decisions to remove a student from that environment should not be made on predetermined criteria associated with a specific identified label. The student will be "enrolled" in his/her home class and school.

In an inclusive system, special education and supplementary services will be provided to the student in the regular class as opposed to removing the student from the regular class in order for that student to receive services in a different place. The IEP meeting will ask: a) What is important for this child to learn"; b) What special education and supplementary services will be necessary in order for the child to be successful in learning; c) How will the school provide those supplementary services in the child's class and school?

In an inclusive system, before a student is removed to a more restrictive environment to receive special education services, the student should have demonstrated that he/she cannot learn in the regular class and/or school when special education and supplementary services are provided there.

In an inclusive system, when the school decides in good faith evidence that a student should be removed in order to enhance his/her education, the goal will be to return that student as quickly as possible to the regular education class, in which he or she remains "enrolled".

None of these outcomes are incompatible with a "continuum of alternative placement options". Inclusion does not mean that a student must be in the regular class during every part of the school day. Inclusion would, however, impact on the way educators view and use the "continuum". That is, inclusion would provide the opportunity for students to be educated in the first option on the continuum, the regular class. Inclusion also emphasizes the second requirement, that forgotten requirement that calls for the provision of supplemental services in conjunction with regular class placement. Removal of students to more restrictive places would occur only when absolutely necessary, that is, when the student is not successful when supplemental services are provided in the regular class. This must be tried first.

None of these relationships preclude the existence of a "continuum of alternative placement options". It does mean there will be changes in the way Illinois and other states implement the requirements for "least restrictive environment" and the "continuum of alternative placements".

It means dramatic changes in where students with disabilities attend school and changes in the roles and responsibilities of professionals. Inclusion will result in more students with disabilities attending school in regular schools and classes. The role of regular education administrators and other professionals will change to accept the responsibility for all students, including those with disabilities. The role of special education cooperatives and special education districts will change from total control of a separate special education system to a cooperative effort with general education as the leader.

Inclusive education cannot occur without these fundamental changes in roles and responsibilities. It is those individuals and groups who are not willing to change that lead the opposition to inclusive schools and would like to see Illinois initiate "partially" inclusive schools.

HOW SHOULD SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES BE FUNDED?

Federal and state laws governing the education of children with disabilities emphasize that the educational needs of the individual child should drive special education decisions. They also mandate that the educational services should be delivered in the home classroom of the student when at all possible. The funding system in Illinois, however, has created priorities that are not the same as those stated in law. School districts and administrators respond to the way that dollars flow. Dollars are appropriated to specific entities for specific purposes. The dollars are not tied to children. That is, the money for special services does not follow the student. If a student is to have the benefit of a certain category of funds, the student must be sent to the place those dollars end up. This paper will discuss how the way special education is currently funded provides incentives for school districts to segregate students with disabilities and suggest how it may be changed to provide incentives to include students in regular classes and schools.

The special education funding system is not separate from but was created with (and is an integral part of) the whole special education system. Special education came late to public education. Before the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), where services were provided, they were largely private, separate and segregated. When IDEA was passed, the public schools system copied the separate and segregated services. Because special education was an added cost, public education demanded to be reimbursed. The system of reimbursement was designed, then, to support the separate and segregated system. The funding, therefore, reinforces the system. Now when schools attempt to change the way they provide special education services by educating students in their home schools and classes, there is very little "special" funding to support their initiative. The dollars stay with the "programs" in separate and segregated environments.

There are nine major funding sources for special education services in Illinois. Two are federal sources and seven are state sources. The nine sources together provided some $529 million for special education services in 1991. Because each of these sources fund certain programs and places, the Illinois system of funding is called "categorical" and each funding source has a separate application and accounting process. This means that districts or cooperatives have to apply nine times and keep nine separate accounts if they choose to apply for funds from each source. A brief description of each of the special funding sources follows:

1. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal funding source and provided $49,859,218 to Illinois in 1991. Dollars flow to the State Board of Education on the basis of the number of eligible students in the state. Seventy-five percent of these dollars flow from the State Board of Education to the special education joint agreements and special education districts and are controlled by the "special education system". Five percent is used by the State Board for administrative costs. Twenty percent can be used by the State Board of Education at its "discretion". By state law, one-half of Illinois "discretionary" dollars are used to pay the board and room

costs of students placed in private residential schools.

2. The other federal funding source is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act-Chapter I. This source provided Illinois with $22,986,606 in 1991. A student can be counted in only one of the two federal funding categories. Chapter I generally includes students with more significant disabilities. These funds also do not flow through to the local district level but are allocated to special education joint agreements and special education districts. Funds from both federal funding sources are controlled by the separate special education system.

3. Personnel Reimbursement is a state funding source for special education teachers. Approved special education joint agreement and special education districts receive a flat amount of $8,000 for each certified professional and $2,800 for non-professional employees. That is, the dollars flow to the separate special education system. Personnel reimbursement is not an equitable distribution of dollars since wealthy and poor systems receive the same amount per teacher and wealthy districts can afford to hire more personnel.

   The State of Illinois spent approximately $196,000,000 in 1991 for personnel reimbursement.

4. Extraordinary Reimbursement is a state funding source designed to cover the extra costs of educating students with more significant needs in the public school district. It supplements personnel reimbursement and the federal IDEA

and Chapter I funds. Extraordinary reimbursement is limited by statute to $2,000 per eligible student. The Extraordinary Reimbursement is by definition a "program" in which "eligible" students are placed. Although students may be in an "Individual Extraordinary Program", the program is designed with specific services available and students are placed in the program to receive those services. Again, the dollars are controlled by the special education system.

The State of Illinois spent approximately $60,799,973 for Extraordinary Reimbursement in 1991.

5. The Private School Tuition Program is the state funding source that reimburses local school districts for part of the tuition costs for special educations students who are not served in the public special education system but assigned to private schools. When a student is placed in a private school, the school district's responsibility for paying private tuition is limited to $4,500 in extra costs over and above the cost of educating a regular education student. The school district pays the first $4,500 and the State picks up everything that is left. The school district's financial risk is limited; the State's financial risk is open ended.

Much of the recent discussion about disincentives for inclusion in Illinois special education funding has centered on the differences in how the State pays for students placed in private schools and how the State pays for similar students who are educated in the public schools. The decision to place a child in a segregated private school is easier and results in the school district paying fewer of its own local dollars than a decision to educate that student in the home school and district.

The State of Illinois spent approximately $24,319,506 for Private School Tuition in 1991.

6. Private School Room and Board is the state fund that pays for a student's room and board costs when the student is placed in a private residential school. The State Board of Education pays for all room and board costs not paid for by another state agency or other obligated third party. The money to pay for room and board costs comes out of the State "discretionary" share of IDEA federal funds.

   State payment from educational funds for room and board at private schools reinforces the other incentives to place students in private schools. Not only are additional dollars set aside to fund that particular choice, full payment of room and board (which averages $45,000 per year per student) reduces potential parent opposition to private placement and reduces the pressure on a school district or cooperative to provide the education itself.

   The State of Illinois spent approximately $9,739,870 for Private School Room and Board in 1991.

7. The State pays for providing transportation for each student with a disability who requires special transportation "in order to take advantage of special education facilities" (Ill. Rev. Stat. 122:14-13.01). Special education transportation

is an entirely separate system from regular education transportation and can be used only to transport special education students separately from regular students. The typical destination is a "special facility". The State reimburses local special education systems 80% of their costs for special education transportation. In the 1990-91 school year, the total cost of special education transportation was approximately $132,000,000 of which the local special education system paid $29,000,000 and the State of Illinois paid $103,000,000.

There is significant potential for cost savings in moving toward educating students in their home classes and schools. As students are brought back from centralized programs to their home schools, the requirements for transportation diminish substantially. The sizeable savings achieved in transportation can offset whatever increase educational costs that arise from providing increased special education supports in other locations. If the school district, however, cannot take the transportation dollars that are saved and use them to pay the increased educational costs, the school district loses money. The State Board of Education needs to redirect savings in special education transportation costs back to the local school districts to help pay for the costs of educating student in their home classes and schools.

8. Orphanage Tuition is a state funding source which pays for providing eduction to students with disabilities who live in orphanages, foster family homes, children's homes and State housing units located within the district. The State

> reimburses a school district an amount equal to the per capita special education cost for each child. Since the State picks up the full cost for educating these students, there is not incentive for the school district in its choice among education settings.
>
> The State of Illinois paid approximately $13,335,519 for Orphanage Tuition in 1991.

Illinois has chosen to attach most of its special education funding to the infrastructure that supports special education. As school districts and cooperatives expand their infrastructure they receive more dollars from the State. if they hire more teachers, they get more dollars. If they do more transporting, they get more dollars. If they use more private schools, they get more dollars. Even in the Extraordinary Tuition program, the trigger for the local special education system getting more dollars from the State is spending dollars to buy services Illinois attaches special education dollars to the spending of money and the building up of the service infrastructure.

Attaching dollars to the infrastructure has three effects. First, it encourages the establishment an expansion of "programs" Second, it sends more dollars to wealthy districts than to poor districts. Third, it makes it difficult for school districts to be responsive to individual student needs.

The existing State funding structure makes it difficult for a school district to choose to set up a system of inclusive education in which the norm is inclusion and the exception is segregation - despite that requirement in federal and State law.

Funds are now tied to all of the institutional supports of segregated special education. If school districts are to have the choice of planning systematically for a inclusive education, the bonds that tie dollars to the institutional supports of segregated special education must be severed.

Attaching dollars to students and severing the bond that ties dollars to the institutional supports of segregated special education would still leave a school district free to plan and maintain a segregated structure for special education if that was their choice. The benefit of severing the bond, however, would be to enable districts to effectively plan and maintain an inclusive system of education.

Creating a special education fund in each district into which all special education funds would be deposited, and from which all special education expenditures would be made, is one way of maintaining the level of special education funding and making accountability easier. Such a fund would allay the fears of those who think that any change in the formulas for distributing special education dollars will result in those dollars being "lost" to general education. There would be more of an incentive for both the federal and state governments to consolidate their current fragmented financial assistance programs into block grants. Such a fund would also make budgeting, record keeping, auditing and cost studies of special education easier and less costly. Illinois should fund special education with a single and equitable formula. The dollars should be sent directly to school districts which are responsible for achieving the results specified in students' Individual Education Plans. Federal dollars should also be sent directly to school districts.

Distribution should be based on a policy of the continuation of fiscal support on at least the current level. The reallocation of special education dollars should not be interpreted to mean a lessening of fiscal support.

> * Adapted from The Identification of Financial Disincentives to Educating Children and Youth with Moderate to Severe and Multiple Developmental Disabilities in their Home Schools. Final Report (A Summary), May, 1993.

THE FEARS ABOUT "DUMPING"

One of the major controversies surrounding the initiative to educate students with disabilities in their home classes and schools is the fear that students will be "dumped" into regular education without the benefit of special supports and services. Adding to this fear is the misconception that when students are educated in regular education classes, they are no longer "eligible" for special education supports and services. Some students and families have had bad experiences when schools have "mainstreamed" or "integrated" students with disabilities into regular education classes. In effect, students have been "dumped" into classes without supports in the name of "mainstreaming" and/or "integration". One of the major tenants of inclusive education is that children can receive supports and services in the "least restrictive environment", the regular classroom. They need not be required to leave the least restrictive environment to be supported and to receive "special education services". This paper will examine the practices of mainstreaming, integration and "dumping" as opposed to "supportive" education in an inclusive education system.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that whenever possible, children with disabilities should be educated in the school he or she would have attended if not identified as having a disability. It uses very strong language regarding under what circumstances schools may remove students to more restrictive environments. The IDEA very clearly requires that removal from regular classrooms and schools should occur only when education cannot be achieved in those environments with the use of supplementary aids and services. In addition, where the law addresses the "continuum of alternative placement options", it places the regular classroom as the starting point of the "continuum". It goes further to protect the rights of students with disabilities by requiring supplemental services be provided in conjunction with regular class placement. In this manner, the IDEA clearly provides the basis for inclusive education, although opponents to educating students with disabilities in regular classes and schools attempt to make the case that "inclusion" has no legal basis. The authors of IDEA recognized that no child should be separated from the mainstream of community life, including school, unless absolutely necessary. They felt so strongly that they placed the burden of proof on the schools to demonstrate that a child cannot learn when provided with supplementary services in regular classes and schools. Further, they recognized that children learn best from each other and through experiences they have while growing up. Inclusion is thus based on the premises of the IDEA.

Unfortunately, when the special education system was established in the State of Illinois, much emphasis was put into "places" rather than "services". For example, the first paragraph of Article 14 of the School Code speaks to the development of "special education facilities". On the other hand, virtually no emphasis was placed on outcomes, curriculum or instruction. As the system evolved, funding was established to fund the places, that is, by sending students to places other than regular classes, school districts could receive funds from a variety of state and federal sources (See How Should Special Education Services Be Funded?). We now have an established system in Illinois where, by and large, students who are identified as needing special education services start out by being removed from regular classes. This practice is supported by current funding patterns. In effect, students are removed to trigger funding and special education instruction/services. In the current system, when students return to regular classes, the funding ceases (even though it may cost just as much to educate that child in a regular class) and the special education services cease (even though that child may need even more support in the regular class). The student with special needs, therefore, has the burden to prove that he or she can "make it" in regular classes without the benefit of special supports. The irony is clear, the current system places a tremendous test on the students who have the most difficulty learning, a test that most students with special learning needs cannot satisfy. "Mainstreaming" and "integration" evolved with the best of intention. However, both were contrived to "fit" the current special education structure wherein students receive support when in "special environments" and do not receive supports when in regular classes.

It is no wonder that many families and students with disabilities have had bad experiences with "mainstreaming" and "integration". Both of the paradigms include the following characteristics:

1. Students are "enrolled" in special education classes or schools. They are, in effect, allowed "to visit" regular classes. There is no sense of belonging...both students in regular and special education learn to think of students with disabilities as "belonging" somewhere else.

2. There is little sharing of professional information between regular and special education professionals. Regular education professionals perceive that the student with special needs is the responsibility of special educators, that the student is not actually of member of the class and that the student may be sent back to the special environment at any time.

3. Mainstreaming and integration generally occur on a "trial" basis, particularly for students whose educational needs necessitate adaptations to the environment and curriculum. The message to students and families is discouraging to say the least. Again, the student is being "tested" against a measure that students with special needs can rarely meet, that is, to keep up with other students without special supports in a curriculum and instruction that have not adapted. It is from these practices that the saying, "sink or swim" has emerged.

4. Mainstreaming and integration generally begin with small increments of time in regular division classes and activities. The student with special needs "shows up" at certain times of the day or for certain academic classes and "goes back" at the end of the activity. Again, there is no sense of belonging on the part of the student. Regular division students and educational professionals expect that the student with special needs will return to the special environment.

5. Students who are "mainstreamed" or "integrated" generally must return to the specialized environment to receive

special supports and services. This is a primary difference between mainstreaming/integration and an inclusive education where students with special needs are provided those special supports in the least restrictive environment, the regular class. It is a difference of supporting students where they are rather than requiring their removal to the services. Without this concept, inclusive schools cannot occur.

6. There are generally prerequisites for mainstreaming and integration. When students are mainstreamed, those prerequisites are usually behavioral and academic. Students with special needs must meet a certain criterion for behavior and must demonstrate an ability to "keep up" with the academic curriculum. When students are integrated, they must meet behavioral criteria. These practices have proven to successfully keep many students with special needs out of regular classes.

When the above situations occur, students with disabilities and their parents have the perception, rightfully so, that they have been "dumped" into regular classes without supports. Students with significant challenges very rarely succeed when they are mainstreamed or integrated without supports. In reality, for many students, mainstreaming and integration are exercises of futility and defeat. A message comes through clearly to students and their parents. We tried and it didn't work. Just as serious is the lack of positive social outcomes. In the traditional system, friendships between students with and without disabilities have not been nurtured....since the enactment of the IDEA, an entire generation has graduated which has been deprived of those friendships. Students with and without disabilities have not been allowed to know, and therefore, value each other. Students without disabilities have learned to believe that people with disabilities do not belong in the mainstream of society, even that people with disabilities should be viewed with pity. Students have not learned how to interact and interdepend. Students with disabilities leave the public school system with very low self-esteem, without the tools to succeed in a diverse society.

"Dumping" is the most common fear associated with inclusive education expressed by parents today. It is understandable, particularly because mainstreaming and integration have not proven to be successful models of meeting the least restrictive environment requirements of IDEA. Inclusion and/or supportive education, while based on the same law, takes an entirely different approach. While mainstreaming and integration do not call for fundamental changes in the special education infrastructure, curriculum and instruction, inclusion recognizes that reform is necessary if we are to truly reach appropriate academic outcomes for students with special needs and appropriate social outcomes for all students. Inclusion recognizes that students with special needs should "start out" and "belong" in the least restrictive environment. It's basic tenant is that the services students receive can be provided where the student is rather than taking the student "out" to the services. When that occurs there are numerous benefits to students with and without disabilities and society-at-large.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The movement from a segregated system of special education to an educational system that is inclusive and responsive to all students requires fundamental changes in the way Illinois' teachers are prepared. Without serious restructuring of colleges of education responsible for pre-service education, Illinois will forever have to rely on inservice models.

Traditional inservice models, alone, will not adequately produce changes in attitude and strategy to provide inclusive schooling. Inservice training alone will not provide sufficient training to a sufficient number of teachers to effect fundamental change in a timely manner. Parents in Illinois are frustrated that policy makers continue to talk about how long change takes while their children continue to grow older. Strong pre-service programs which totally immerse teacher trainees in teaching students with diverse learning styles are absolutely essential.

What are we attempting to achieve in our schools? Noted Harvard educator, Howard Gardner, has described a new wave of reform. He states that schools are attempting to "....educate for understanding....having a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles, or skills so that you can bring them to bear on new problems and situations....knowing how kids learn is the key". Gardner describes recent research at Johns Hopkins University in which students who had gotten A's in physics classes were asked questions regarding how the world works. It was found that the students questioned did not know how to apply what they had learned in class. Most schools, if not all, have taught to the scholastic learner with expectations and standards for both special and general education students which do not constitute understanding. As an example, Boston College recently found that Illinois valedictorians and salutatorians did no better on adult-life achievement markers than did their peers who did not achieve "academic excellence" in high school and college.

Good teachers and administrators have recognized for a long time that traditional methods of assessment and teaching have not met the needs of many children and youth. If traditional methods were meeting the needs, we would not have an increasing number of children in poverty, we would not have the terrible unemployment and underemployment of graduates of special education programs, we would not continue to see the disenfranchising of youth who look to gangs to feel they belong and we would not see the continuing segregation of children into schools and classrooms where their experience during the schools day is extremely limited. We would not continue to see tracking of students and we would not continue to see the high numbers of young black males referred for special education services.

A good example of how pre-service teacher training falls short are some of the current questions on the Illinois competency examination for teachers of students labeled as Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH):

- A student is self-abusive on a daily basis. At what point would aversive techniques be used/implemented?

- One of the major advantages of a Special Day School is:

- The advantage of a residential placement is:

- The majority of time in a TMH student's day would most likely be spent in:

The above examples point out the general theme of how special education teachers are being trained to teach. The continuing segregation of special and general education faculties in colleges and universities preparing professionals for our schools of the future has to stop. Separate faculties and separate departments send clear messages to young undergraduates preparing to be teachers. They "learn" that their roles are separate and, therefore, the children they teach must be separated. Young general and special education teachers then participate in staffings that separate children and the cycle continues. The pattern of separating and segregating children has to be interrupted at the professional preparation level in the colleges and universities.

The interruption of patterns of modeling and teaching separateness and segregation in the universities and colleges will be difficult, and most probably more difficult than it will be in the public schools. First, Illinois has a system of financing special education that attaches the child's categorical label to special education class size to teacher certification and subsequent teacher competency tests. As long as this system exists, universities and colleges will have to manage the tension of training teachers and administrators for the schools of the future while making sure the students can pass the competency exams so they can be a teacher or an administrator in a school.

Second, while most states, if not all, have a university and college program approval section or department, and seek accreditation of their programs from an independent source, no vehicle exists to monitor and enforce that university professionals receive inservice or staff development on issues related to least restrictive environment. To remedy this, the program approval section of the State Board of Education could monitor university programs and courses as to how well they train professionals on the same components teachers and administrators in the school districts are monitored. There could also be a system of commendations for those universities and colleges doing an extraordinary job in preparing teachers and administrators for inclusive schools of the future.

Third, professionals who prepare teachers and administrators typically have terminal degrees requiring no more schooling to advance in salary and job status. Also, when universities have voluntary staff developmental programs, they are often not taken advantage of. Universities and colleges will need incentive programs in order to develop a cadre of professors who are able to prepare teachers and administrators for schools of the future.

Fourth, once an individual determines to be a university professional, very little time is spent in schools with children and their teachers unless that professional is assigned, or has external monies to do so. Unless the university professional spends considerable time in the public schools as a learner, the professional will continue to prepare teachers and administrators with the perspective on the schools that was predominant when he/she left to pursue a university career. Colleges of education could address this issue by developing true partnerships between schools and universities. True partnerships are evidenced in faculty exchanges where university faculty teacher in public schools and school faculty teach in universities. Important in partnerships is that all participants are viewed as learners and no partner comes with more prestige than others.

Fifth, the annual personnel evaluation process in universities and colleges most often does not reward a professor's impact in the schools, impact on teacher and administrator preparation or on collaboration and cooperation among faculty members. Consequently, professors do not see their mission as working to improve education in a given state or locale or to provide a collaborative teacher preparation program with general education. In order to make education better in a state or a city, the personnel evaluation process will have to include rewards for impact on improving education, collaboration and cooperation. Assignments and personnel procedures should be flexible and reward the individual professor's diversity and growth rather than expecting everyone to accomplish the same number of research articles and grant awards in a given year.

Sixth, and finally, as the special educator's role is currently changing from a teacher in a segregated classroom to an inclusion facilitator where he or she makes adaptations and modifications to the general education curriculum and provides other supports to students who are disabled, the special educator often reports feeling more like an aide than a teacher. The changing roles of both the special and general educators need to be addressed at the university level. Since no particular pedagogy for teaching students with disabilities has historically emerged, and since strategies that are successful at accomplishing understanding with children without disabilities will be successful with children with disabilities, colleges and universities need to address whether an undergraduate program preparing special education teachers is warranted. The future will, however, require that we develop graduate teacher education programs for experienced teachers to become "masters" at teaching and supporting students and other classroom teachers who are diverse in race, background, income, gender, disability and so on. New roles will need to be visioned, and universities and colleges will play important roles if they develop flexible cohort groups that pursue the understanding of the many facets of teaching and schooling.

While large systemic issues are being addressed, many smaller strategies that would have considerable impact can be employed by colleges of education. Some of these involve establishing task forces to examine the different issues such as the need of both a special education and a general education department, a vision for the preparation of a teacher in an inclusive classroom and an administrator in an inclusive building , and strategies that educators can use to teach all children understanding. Cohort groups of undergraduates could be established and state department waivers on course requirements could be obtained for sound experimental programs. Deans could work with personnel committees to establish alternative and flexible evaluation procedures for collaboration and local and state involvement in the schools. All of these are just a few of the initiatives that could be implemented tomorrow if the will to do so is present.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES?

To understand how **inclusion** is beneficial for families, one must first understand how **exclusion** has been detrimental to families in Illinois. Having a child with a disability changes the mechanics of a family but it does not change the desire and willingness to modify homes and lifestyles to ensure the inclusion of the child into every facet of family life.

Families of children who have disabilities do not view their children as being too severely or too profoundly involved to enable inclusion in the family, the school and the community. Their desires for their child with a disability are no different than the desire for other children: to be valued; to be accepted; to be included in the day-to-day activities of life.

Exclusion from school means exclusion from the neighborhood and from the community in general. Exclusion means that friends from school live across town or in the next county, which often excludes the natural development of those friendships outside of school. Exclusion from school for the purpose of receiving "special" education sets children with disabilities and their families "apart" from the school and community. These are the children who desperately need to believe that he or she is an equal member of that school or community. Exclusion destroys the self-esteem of the child and the family, often making it impossible for families to live in peace and harmony with one another.

The families of children with disabilities face many challenges and frequently a great deal of tension. The exclusion of children with disabilities from school and community forces families to have to struggle constantly to achieve in school what they have long since mastered at home, INCLUSION!

Families of children with disabilities and adults with disabilities are some of Illinois' greatest resources. We need to examine the place of adults with disabilities (who were once children with disabilities) and what their place is in the family. Adults with disabilities are a valuable resource because they have come from and experienced the familial aspects of having a disability. Illinois' schools must begin to accept and utilize these valuable resources to gain a greater understanding of inclusive education and the benefits for all.

Families should be supported morally and financially in their efforts to include their children with disabilities into every facet of family and community life, including school. The elimination of the distinction "special" (which implies different) from services provided by the educational system will begin to break down some of the barriers faced by families externally as well as internally. Families of children with disabilities do not want to be viewed as "special" but, rather, as families with the same desires and goals as any other family.

The benefits to families of inclusive education are really benefits to the community as a whole and include:

- A greater ability to participate as a valued member of one's school and community.

- A sense of belonging in one's neighborhood and, as such, a greater willingness to promote neighborhood values.

- The enhancement of natural friendships based on mutual interests, which have the chance to develop naturally through neighborhood interactions outside of school.

- The ability of families to "get involved" in their neighborhood schools and to support them out of a sense of common ownership and acceptance.

- A reduction of the stress to families brought on by trying to be everywhere and meet the needs of everyone at the same time, i.e. children being placed at a different school every year for the purpose of "meeting the child's educational needs".

- The return of a sense of control to the family over the many outside elements which constantly threaten to undermine the belief that our children can participate equally in our communities and our schools.

CATEGORICAL LABELS

Categorical labels were first used as an administrative and record-keeping practice at a time when society viewed children with disabilities from a historically different perspective. Today, we as a society, and certainly we as parents, view children with disabilities as children FIRST, with the same dreams and desires as all children. As such, categorical labels placed on children for educational, administrative, or other reasons are no longer acceptable.

ALL children have unique educational needs. Most students find accommodations for those needs within the general education classroom, i.e. extra credit opportunities for students who are academically advanced, remedial math or reading for students who need extra assistance, cooperative work groups within classrooms, etc. Only students with disabilities are subjected to categorical labels as a prerequisite to receiving accommodations in school.

The use of categorical labels in our schools serve no educational or social purpose for students, and funding sources have the capacity to provide financial support **without** categorical labels.

Categorical labels cause harm to children with disabilities and their families, by creating diminished expectations, by denying the **individuality** of children with disabilities, and by perpetuating the segregation of children based on "educational" category. Furthermore, categorical labels perpetuate attitudinal barriers by drawing unnecessary attention disability, rather than ability, which continues to have a negative impact on children and their families long after the child leaves the school system. This negative impact affects the future of the child in a very real way. Due to labeling, children have an inaccurate picture of their place in life and of their potential. As a result of this inaccurate self-perception, the child may become a dependent or non-productive adult.

Obviously, there are some very successful adults with disabilities who were once children with disabilities, and were labeled in some way. These individuals had to go through a great deal of redefinition of their self and their environment in order to function as competent, productive adults. People with disabilities have to waste energy trying to prove their worth and abilities as a human being--the worth and abilities that are ignored because of a **label.**

All people are unique and diverse. To separate someone because of a label is to say that that person's difference is unacceptable. Our society, including our schools, need to celebrate diversity, not hide it away and behind a categorical label.

Students with disabilities must have available to them the same choices in education which ALL students have. Categorical labels severely limit and often eliminate the opportunity for choice. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was designed to be a great equalizer of education for children with disabilities. It was never meant to take away the opportunities of children with disabilities. ALL children should have access to quality education, and quality education means that children should have choices.

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Categorization and Funding; Illinois Disincentives to Home School Inclusion, R. Hemp, University of Illinois Chicago, University Affiliated Program, S. Freagon, Northern Illinois University and R. Leininger, Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS

It has become apparent that students with disabilities in Illinois are:

- being denied admittance into their home schools, in part, due to the existence of architectural barriers,
- being segregated into the only building in a district or county which is considered accessible,
- being subjected to categorical labels based solely on environmental need,
- often being subjected to inappropriate educational placements which are based on environmental rather than academic/educational need.

The issue of architectural barriers is complex, primarily because it calls into question funding shortages and prioritization of limited resources, and because the issue has not been closely studied by federal and state policymakers. However, the issue must be addressed, and solutions must be found to enable ALL students with disabilities access to their home schools.

A report published by the National Council on Disability says that the main reason reported by school districts for non-compliance with the Least Restrictive Environment mandates is "accessibility problems with public schools."

The federal and state statutes are in place, and funding resources to exist from a variety of sources to allow for the removal of architectural barriers in public school buildings.

Federal, state and district resources should be prioritized to enable school districts to remove architectural barriers which deny students with disabilities access to inclusion in their home schools. Districts must be held accountable for meeting the requirements for the removal of architectural barriers which are mandated for all places of public accommodation in accordance with eh Environmental Barriers Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 34 CFR Subsection 104.34.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; 300 CFR Subsection 300.500, 300.551 and 300.552.

TEACHER SUPPORTS

Teachers today are educating increasingly diverse groups of students, including students with disabilities, in general education settings. In order for students with disabilities to be included successfully in general education settings, a variety of supports will be necessary for teachers and other school personnel. In particular, both general and special education teachers will need to learn and refine a variety of new skills which will allow them to collaborate to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities. Various administrative supports will be needed, as well.

Need for inservice training. Many general education teachers may have had little or no education related to working with students with disabilities. Likewise, many special educators' training has focused solely on working with students outside of the general education classroom. For inclusion to be a positive and beneficial process for all involved, general education and special education teachers must share a common core of basic skills and knowledge related to each others' discipline. Inservice training is needed to support teachers in learning and applying these skills. Also, inservice training is needed to help teachers learn strategies that allow them to effectively educate heterogeneous groups of students. Many of these types of strategies have been identified (e.g. cooperative teaming, peer tutoring, individualized instruction), but inservice support must be provided to teachers as they learn about and implement these strategies. A related area in which teachers will require support as they learn new skills is the use of methods that assist in creating a positive classroom climate in which diversity is celebrated.

Finally, teachers will require significant inservice training and support in collaboration skills. Successful inclusion of students with disabilities depends on the ability of education professionals from a variety of disciplines (speech therapists, classroom teachers, social workers) to work as a team and share their expertise to develop and implement a plan that is beneficial to all students. Teachers and therapists will need support and training as they learn to release their traditional expectations of themselves and other professionals to function more as a team to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Supports from administration. One role of public school administrators is to motivate and provide support to teachers in a variety of ways. In particular, administrators can support teachers by taking the lead in establishing a school climate supportive of inclusion. Teachers need public, visible support and recognition from administration regarding their efforts to include students with disabilities. A school climate in which diversity is valued can be a key factor in successful inclusion.

Teachers will also need adequate time to plan together with their colleagues. It is critical that the administrative organization of the school be arranged to allow frequent, ongoing opportunities for general and special education professionals to plan and teach collaboratively. Financial constraints in most districts make it challenging for administrators to support teachers by arranging joint planning time, but this collaboration time must be recognized as a necessity in planning and implementing effective instructional plans for all students.

Administrators and program supervisors should also be able to provide teachers with constructive feedback and support related to their efforts to include students with disabilities in general education settings. In many cases, administrators with little or no knowledge related to inclusion are put in the position of supervising educators teaching in inclusive settings. Teachers should be able to look toward administrators as a source of support, guidance, and constructive feedback. It seems important, then, that administrators learn about effective strategies for educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings so that they can become a useful source of support for teachers.

Additional information regarding this topic may be found in the following:

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Coalition on School Inclusion Issue Paper regarding Administrative Supports.

Coalition on School Inclusion Issue Paper regarding Teacher Preparation.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS

Recent research has highlighted the critical importance of administrative and organizational support in implementing best practices programming for students with disabilities. In order for inclusion of students with disabilities to be successful, the cooperation, support, and active leadership of district administrators is key. Administrators are in advantageous positions to influence what happens in schools by virtue of their control over allocation of resources, their control over the communication system within the building or district, and their unique position to reward desirable and sanction undesirable behavior from staff and students. Within the scope of daily routines and responsibilities, principals and other administrators make decisions and form policy (formal or informal) that can serve to either hinder or facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities.

How can administrators support inclusion? Many of the actions and decisions made by administrators ultimately affect the ease with which students with disabilities are included in general education settings. Some of the most important areas are highlighted below:

- **Helping to create an accepting and supporting school climate.** By creating a vision of a school community with respect and value for individual differences in students and staff, inclusion can be facilitated. A school mission that values effort, character, and respect for others can be key in helping staff and students recognize that students with disabilities are a real and valued part of the student body, working in concert with other students toward attaining the goals such a mission entails. Administrators can be powerful models for staff and students; by modelling age-appropriate, respectful interactions on a regular basis with students with disabilities, administrators can help set a positive tone toward inclusion. By making a conscious effort to include students with disabilities in all regular "daily school life" routines in a way as close to typical as possible, administrators can help students without disabilities to see students receiving special education as regular students, like themselves in many ways. As a result, these general education students may never learn some of the historical prejudices toward persons with disabilities and may learn to have a positive and accepting attitude toward diversity.

- **Organizing teacher schedules to allow for collaboration.** The one barrier to implementation of best practices in inclusive education cited most consistently by teachers is lack of time. In order for students with disabilities to be educated productively in inclusive settings, time must be available on a regular basis for all professionals involved with the student (special education teacher, general education teacher, therapists) to collaborate in designing, implementing, and monitoring a student's program. Administrators will be challenged to find creative ways to arrange for this time, given the financial costs in most districts. Collaborative planning time, however, is a necessity for successful inclusion and must be made available on a regular basis.

Time must also be made available so that all staff members involved with the student can attend IEP or other meetings where important decisions regarding the student's education are made. It is not unusual for IEP meetings to be held for students in inclusive classrooms without the general education teacher present, as no money has been set aside to pay for substitutes so that general education teachers can attend these meetings. Since general education teachers in inclusive settings are considered as collaborators in planning and implementing a student's program, their attendance at these meetings is critical.

- **Ensuring access to important school activities and traditions.** Administrators must take a leadership role in finding ways for students with disabilities to become involved in on-going activities in schools by arranging for physical and "policy" access. One rather obvious consideration is physical accessibility throughout the building. Students with disabilities should be able to conveniently access school environments such as bathrooms, classrooms, water fountains, the cafeteria, and locker rooms. Consideration of wheelchair accessibility of locations for major events such as proms, football games, or class trips can facilitate inclusion. Likewise, accessible, integrated transportation (to the same extent provided to students without disabilities, e.g., a fan bus or bus to a field trip site) can lead to more interaction between students. It is not unusual for students who cannot ride regular school buses due to inaccessibility to have to travel by car with the special education teacher or a parent if they wish to participate in these important traditional school events.

In addition to physical access, administrators should ensure access to other school activities or traditions. Making provisions for students receiving special education to be recognized for achievement in the same way that general education students are recognized is one way to do this. Additional staff support can be made available to allow students with disabilities to participate regularly in extracurricular activities. Rather than organization of separate, "special" activities and accommodations, administrators should strive to routinely make it possible for students with disabilities to become involved in traditional school events in the same way that students without disabilities are involved.

- **Providing appropriate and meaningful supervision and inservice.** Providing support and guidance in designing and implementing inclusive educational programs should be a responsibility of school administration. Teachers will require significant inservice training to learn to collaborate and to design and implement effective instruction to all students in inclusive classrooms. Administrators must recognize and respond to the need for teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills and arrange for it to be made available.

Teachers should be able to look toward administrators for support, guidance, and constructive feedback. As such, administrators need to take the initiative to learn about effective strategies for educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings so that they can provide more appropriate supervision to teachers. It is critical that administrators and supervisors evaluate their own knowledge of issues related to inclusion and the leadership skills necessary to facilitate inclusion and seek inservice training and consultation for themselves when needed.

- **Lobbying for policies and procedures supportive of inclusion.** One final way in which administrators can support efforts toward inclusion is by recognizing a responsibility for advocacy. Many barriers exist to inclusion which are not within the control of teachers or building-level administrators. Regulations and procedures (i.e. funding, teacher certification and hiring) at the local and state levels can have a significant impact on the way in which services are delivered and the availability of personnel and other supports to students in inclusive classrooms. Administrators at all levels must find creative ways to solve problems associated with policies and procedures restrictive of efforts toward inclusion and actively seek to develop policies that facilitate and promote inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

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INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The federal government mandates that education provided to students receiving special education services be appropriate and suitable for their individual needs. To accomplish this, the federal rules and regulations call for the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student.

What an IEP is... and is not. An IEP is required to include the following elements: a) a statement of the child's present level of functioning; b) a statement of annual goals, including short-term objectives; c) a statement of the specific special education and related services to be provided to the child, and the extent that the child will participate in regular education programs; d) projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of the services; and e) appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether the short term instructional objectives are being achieved. In addition, IEPs for older students must include a statement of needed transition services, and, if appropriate, a statement of participating agencies' responsibilities or linkages in the school-to-work transition process before the student leaves the school setting. IEPs are not legally binding contracts nor can the schools or teachers be held accountable if the student does not progress as specified in the IEP. However, if parents feel that good faith efforts are not being made to assist the child in achieving the goals and objectives listed in the IEP, they may request revisions of the child's program or use due process procedures to ensure that the child is receiving an appropriate, individualized education.

It is intended that the IEP be developed collaboratively. It is required that the child's teacher, a representative of the school (other than the child's teacher) be qualified to supervise the provision of special education, one or both parents, and the child (if appropriate) attend IEP meetings. Schools must make efforts to include parents in the IEP process by notifying parents early enough so that they have an opportunity to attend the meeting and by scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place.

IEPs and Inclusion. Students receiving special education services who are included in general education settings maintain their rights accorded by law. Being included in general education classes does not mean that the child does not have an IEP. Conversely, the IEP is critically important in facilitating inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

- IEPs are working documents developed collaboratively by those individuals involved with the child. parents need to be considered qual participants in the IEP process, along with the therapists, teachers and others working with the child. By working together, parents and professionals can most appropriately design an inclusive and productive educational program for the student.

- An IEP is to be designed individually for each student. The IEP provides a vehicle by which high-priority educational concerns for a students are identified and individualized plans for addressing them are discussed. Inclusion in general education classrooms does not take away students' rights to have a program design to meet their individual needs.

- A copy of an IEP and any other pertinent documents (i.e., emergency information, medical information) for each students receiving special education services must be provided to general education teachers. General education teachers play a key role in the IEP process for students included in general education settings. It is critical that general education teachers be involved int eh development of the IEPs of students for whom they share responsibility. General education teachers must be at IEP meetings and be considered as contributors to and implementors of the plan.

- An IEP serves to ensure that appropriate special education and related services are provided to students with disabilities included in general education settings. Supports and services needed to ensure student success in inclusive classrooms are appropriately addressed through IEPs. Determination of the supports needed by an individual student to function in general education settings is an integral component of the IEP, as is documentation of the school's commitment to provision of these resources.

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TERMS, HOW DO THEY DIFFER?

Least Restrictive Environment

This term appears in the language of the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as Public Law 94-142. It refers to the placement of special education eligible students in the educational environment which least restricts their interactions with students not identified as eligible for special education. For most students this would be an age appropriate classroom in the school he/she would attend if not identified as eligible for special education . Moving to a more restrictive placement can only be done where there is documentation that the student's needs cannot be met in the regular classroom with necessary aids and supports.

Integration

This term refers to a student's placement out of a special education environment into a regular education environment for part(s) of the student's education. The student is "enrolled" in a segregated special education program. The student must generally meet certain prerequisites before s/he is allowed to be "integrated". For example, in order to be "integrated" in academic classes, students must be able to "keep up" with the academic curriculum. In order to be "integrated" for social purposes, the student does not necessarily have to meet academic standards, but must demonstrate prerequisite social skills. This delivery model identifies the student as a "special" rather than regular education student.

Mainstreaming

This term refers to the process of placing a student who is enrolled in a special education class or program into one or more regular academic classes. Students who are mainstreamed are usually expected to meet regular education standards with very minor modifications in curriculum or methodology . Prerequisite skills are generally felt to be necessary since the same standards for success are applied for all students. This delivery model identifies the student as a "special" rather than regular education student.

Regular Education Initiative

This term, often called "REI", was first referenced by Madeline Will, former Director of the United States Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). As referenced by Ms. Will, the term refers to the unification of what has become two separate educational systems, the regular education and the special education systems. REI efforts generally take two forms. First, for students not yet identified as eligible for special education, "pre-referral" strategies are used in the regular classroom to avoid a referral to special education. Second, for students already identified as eligible for special education services, services are delivered in a less restrictive way utilizing such methods as collaboration, consultation and "in general education class" rather than in resource rooms.

It should be noted that the REI initiative in Illinois includes students who have been identified as having mild learning disabilities, educable mentally handicapped and behavior disorders and excludes those with more challenging disabilities.

Inclusion

This term refers to students with disabilities being educated in their home schools and in the general education environment(s). The difference between "integration", "mainstreaming" and inclusion is that inclusion provides for appropriate supports, aids, and curricular adaptations designed individually and specifically for each student. Those supports, aids and curricular adaptations are provided in the regular education environment rather than requiring the student to be "removed" to another location. Inclusion most closely follows the wording and intent of federal law, "To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who do not have a disability, and special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environments occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes **with the use of supplementary aids and services** cannot be achieved satisfactorily." 20 U.S.C.1412(5)(B)

Another term for inclusion is **Supported Education**. This term refers to the return to one educational system for all students; where all students are regarded as rightful members of their class and home school; and where each and every student is provided instructional curricula to meet their individual needs and learning styles. All educational staff share responsibility for all students.

Home School

The home school is the school a student would attend if s/he was not eligible for special education services. The school that the eligible student's brothers, sisters, and neighborhood friends attend.

Program

Every student receiving any special education services must have an individually written program that spells out what skills are going to be taught and how they will be taught. This requirement in the IDEA is called the Individual Education Program (I.E.P.) The program is the specific curriculum for an individual student; it is **what** is taught and the methods used for that individual student. **Program** is the "specially designed instruction and related services" as stated in the law.

Placement

This term refers to the place(s) or environment(s) in which the specially designed instruction and related services are taught. **Placement** is the building, the classroom(s), and the community environments in which the student's program takes place. **Placement** is the bricks and mortar.

Unfortunately, in Illinois, a system has evolved where schools "place" students into existing "programs" rather than writing and implementing a "program" for the individual student. Therefore, "**Placement**" has begun to be seen as "**Program**" rather than **where** the instruction is experienced and learned. **Program** and **Placement** are two totally separate issues and they are both guaranteed by law.

Meeting

There are two kinds of meetings required by the IDEA. Sometimes the meetings are called conferences. An Individual Program Plan (I.E.P.) meeting is held at least once each year for the purposes of reviewing a student's progress, wiring the specially designed instruction and related services plan for the student's next school year, and determining **where** the instruction and services will be provided. This meeting is sometimes called an "**Annual Review**" because one of the purposes of the meeting is to review progress by discussing the student's present levels of performance and stating the student's needs. According to the law, the people who **must** be in attendance at the I.E.P. meeting are the parent/guardian, the student when appropriate, the teacher, and a local school district representative. Others may be invited (such as a therapist, social worker, or nurse) but are not required by law.

A **Multi-disciplinary Conference (M.D.C.)** is held after a student has been evaluated and to determine eligibility for special education services. Those who need to be in attendance at an M.D.C. are **all** of the team members who provide any instruction or related services to the student.

Student Supports

"Supplementary aids and services" [20U.S.C.1412(5)(B)] for a student to achieve educational benefit in the general education environment are **supports**. These supports can be as simple as the student's seating place in the classroom to reasonably accommodate for a vision, hearing, motor, or attention need. The supports can also be as complex as an electronic augmentative communication system with trained paraprofessionals available to assist a student in all classes.

The I.E.P. process assists the team members to determine supports by identifying each individual student's needs. After the needs are identified, the possibilities for supports can seldom be an exhaustive list. Carbon paper for a fellow student to take notes, special equipment and furniture, peer tutors (buddies), assistive technology, adapted curriculum, adapted tests and materials, individual assistants, certified staff consultants, or textbooks on audiotapes are but a few. Being creative is the key to generating, developing and implementing supports for a student's success and benefit in the educational system.

It is sometimes difficult to separate **"student supports"** from **"teacher supports"** as most high technology or additional trained personnel; adaptations to curriculum or materials; and consultation or team teaching by staff with certain expertise, though written as specific aids for a student, inherently support and assist the teacher in providing instruction.

HOW CAN THE STATE BE ACCOUNTABLE?

Whenever fundamental change occurs, a sound plan for measuring the outcomes of change must occur as an integral component of planning. Most individuals, even when in agreement that change must occur, will express concern regarding whether or not the desired outcomes will actually be accomplished. Currently, accountability for special education services is a major issue for families and graduates of the Illinois system. Students have not graduated with skills and abilities necessary to live, work and participate in the community-at-large. A generation of graduates from the Illinois' special education system are struggling with general acceptance as citizens in Illinois communities. Most importantly, a generation of graduates from the regular education and special education systems have not had the opportunity to know and value each other. We need to examine the schools' accountability for students who are identified as needing special education services, who should be held accountable in an inclusive education system and how accountability should be measured by the state educational agency.

Educational accountability is measured by adult outcomes. Education's primary responsibility is to prepare students to participate and contribute individually in the communities in which they live. Low expectations for students identified as needing special education services traditionally have led to low expectations in adulthood. The current separate special education system does not prepare students with disabilities for meaningful jobs and full participation after graduation. It is the lack of meaningful outcomes that has led families to initiate the movement for more inclusive schools. They have recognized, as did the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954, that "separate but unequal has no place" and that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." They are looking for the same protections and accountability that has been demanded by parents of students in the regular education system for years. As Illinois moves toward inclusive education, it is vital that planning occur to assure that meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities are accomplished. It means a fundamental change from measuring only processes and paperwork to measuring individual student results as well.

Currently, for example, the Illinois special education monitoring system does not measure individual progress on students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP). Rather, the monitoring is limited to assuring certain procedures have been met in the hopes that the "process" will lead to appropriate individual outcomes. Schools are measured in such areas as providing public notice, attendance by "required" individuals at individual student staffings, whether or not certain policies have been written and filed, whether or not students have received certain "evaluations", etc. This type of monitoring alone has not led to positive student outcomes and has not made schools accountable for how students with special needs are educated. It has rather, developed into a massive cyclical monitoring system that virtually measures whether or not "i's" have been dotted and "t's" have been crossed. The procedural requirements for special education have become so complicated that schools rarely attain a "perfect" score. While certain procedures are important and should be monitored, the major outcome of any accountability system should be the educational outcomes for students.

Who should be accountable for students with disabilities? Under the current segregated system of education, regular administrators and school boards have relinquished the responsibility for students who need special education services to special education cooperatives, regional low incidence programs or, in some larger metropolitan areas, special education districts. The "special" systems are virtually responsible for every aspect of students' education once an identification for special education is made. They control the finances, make placement determinations and control all aspects of curriculum and instruction. Parents who approach school officials and school boards are frustrated by the response that their child's education is the responsibility of the "special" system. This is one good example of how the segregated education system discriminates against families of children with special needs.

The separate special education sytem has set up and perpetuates a system of double standards for students. The double standard crosses all aspects of the students' education, including financing, instruction, parental involvemnt, extra-curricular activities and accountability. There is a general prevailing attitude that students with special needs are "different" and "different" systems, policies and practices, therefore, dominate their school careers. There is also a general prevailing attitude that regular educators and administrators do not have the capabilties to educate students with disabilities. This misconception evolved as a result of the special education movement in the 1960's and 70's, when higher education began to train "specialists" (See, "Teacher Preparation").

The relinquishing of control and responsibility for students with disabilities was an inadvertent discrimination against students with disabilities. History has demonstrated that the separate system has not produced accountability. Most importantly, the removal of an entire class of students from the regular education system has resulted in great losses for those students and their parents. They do not have access to the same natural protections and accountability systems accessible to other students and families. An inclusive education system will require that school boards and regular educators take back the responsibility for all of their students, regardless of diverse learning styles and needs.

How should the state educational agency assure that accountability is present in an inclusive education system? The responsibilities of the Illinois State Board of Education can be viewed on several levels. First, the state agency must accept responsibility for providing necessary supports to assure transition to an inclusive system of education that is as smooth as possible. Educators and parents throughout the state have expressed the need for a regular and accessible program of inservice training for all education personnel. This program should be established immediately with enough resources to assure that quality assistance is accessible to all districts. The State Board of Education should bring together school professionals and parents from school districts that have successfully attained an inclusive system to make recommendations for inservice training needs for school personnel.

Second, the State Board of Education should commit adequate resources to current family networks for the purpose of enhancing parental training, participation and input at the local district level. Parents are natural experts and advocates for their children and should be viewed as important assets in assuring appropriate students outcomes are being accomplished.

Third, the State Board of Education should work with the Illinois system of higher education to assure that teachers and other professionals are trained in inclusive teacher preparation programs. Those programs should train professionals to teach students with diverse learning styles and needs in an inclusive education system. Institutions of higher education should look within to break down the divisions between regular and special education preparation programs. If necessary, incentives should be offered and, in all cases, the teacher certification board should be responsive and sensitive to programs that would train teachers to teach all students in inclusive settings.

Fourth, the Illinois State Board of Education should look within and examine its own structure, policies and procedures. All systems, policies, programs, procedures, regulations, etc., should be evaluated for adherence to the value of inclusive education. Where there are inconsistencies with the inclusive outcome, changes should be made.

Fifth, the Illinois State Board of Education should immediately revamp the special education monitoring system to be consistent with the outcome of inclusive education. Less emphasis should be placed on processes and procedures, except where mandated by law, and more emphasis on the outcomes of individual students. An effective accountability system must include a means to enforce compliance at the local district level once non-compliance is identified.

CURRICULUM ISSUES

Much attention has been paid in recent years to public school curriculum. The current school reform and restructuring movements in our nation seem to have in large part arisen over concerns about the outcomes of public schooling--what students are and are not learning in school. Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms requires serious consideration of curriculum issues. Curriculum is a particularly important issue related to inclusion of students with disabilities. One of the common myths is that students who do not succeed in the standard academic curriculum should be removed from the regular education environment without any consideration for curriculum adaptation and modification.

Thinking about curriculum. Traditionally, curriculum refers to the content that is presented to students--information organized in a sequential fashion so that students pass through it in the same order at relatively the same pace as their peers. This "lock-step", academic content-oriented curriculum has historically posed problems for students with diverse learning styles and needs. It is important to note that this traditional curriculum makes it difficult to address the learning needs of diverse groups of students. An underlying assumption of this model is that students learn the same amount of material in the same amount of time through exposure to the same materials and activities. A second assumption which is cause for consideration is that this lock-step, academic curriculum will lead to the desired outcomes of schooling: productive, contributing, and caring members of a diverse society who have the opportunity to make choices about how they will spend their time as adults.

There are other ways to think about curriculum which place more value on individual differences in learning needs and characteristics. Major reform needs to occur to alter the way educators typically conceptualize curriculum.

Curriculum issues for students with disabilities. For some students, no changes in the general curriculum will be needed. These students, functioning at the same grade levels as their peers without disabilities, may require changes in presentation (i.e., text written in Braille, materials read aloud, use of interpreters etc.) Changes may also be needed in the way student success is determined. For some students, because of their learning styles, changes must be made to the standard curriculum if they are to be successful in school. For some students, these changes can be viewed as adaptations to the standard curriculum. For all students, there is a need for individualization of curriculum. Increased flexibility in implementation and assessment and individualization of curriculum are needed in order for diverse groups of students to be successful in schools.

To enable students to be contributing members of society and have the opportunity to make choices about how they will spend their time as adults, a variety of learning environments and curriculum approaches is needed. For example, one educational practice for students calls for a curriculum organized by domains (domestic, community, leisure-recreation, vocational) in which students learn and practice high- priority skills in the environments in which they will ultimately use those skills. This may necessitate instruction in settings outside of the general education classroom. It is important to note, however that differences in curriculum do not necessitate segregation or prevent inclusion of students with disabilities. Rather, the challenge to educators is to collaborate to design an individualized program for students that is inclusive and productive for the student. The types of out-of-classroom experiences needed by students with disabilities can and should be shared by general education peers. In fact, provision of opportunities to learn skills in natural settings can only enhance the education of all students--those with and without disabilities.

Although some educators and parents have been concerned that inclusion of students with disabilities would cause problems for general education students in that the teacher would not be able to progress through the material at the same speed due to the needs (or disruption) of the special education students, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that this is not the case. With the provision of proper supports to students and teachers, inclusion should not have a negative impact upon the achievement levels of general education students.

Current trends in education call for attention to be given to various aspects of racial and ethnic diversity--often referred to as multicultural education. An additional aspect of curriculum as it relates to inclusion is the provision of information to general education students about disabilities. Efforts to include students with disabilities can be enhanced by providing information about disabilities and by accurate and positive portrayals of persons with disabilities. Typically, special units or activities focusing on disabilities are introduced into the general education curriculum. A different and more effective approach may be to infuse information at appropriate points in the general education curriculum. Rather than adding materials specifically focused on disabilities, general and special educators should collaborate to include information about disabilities throughout the general education curriculum at all levels and subject areas.

Students learn a great deal during their years of schooling that is not presented formally in classes. Their observations of and interactions with other students and school staff are important in formulating the attitudes and impressions of others that they will have as adults. Inclusion is particularly important, then, in creating citizens who appreciate and value people with disabilities. As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, it is critical that we educate together students with and without disabilities in school communities in which all people are welcomed and diversity is celebrated. Students of today will be the policy makers of the future; to create a truly inclusive, supportive society for all people, we must begin in schools by modelling the types of actions we hope to see in our society in the future.

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